

**Historic, Archive Document**

Do not assume content reflects current  
scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.



A280  
C76

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
LIBRARY



BOOK NUMBER    A280  
                             C76

WHAT CATHOLIC OVERSEAS ORGANIZATIONS HAVE LEARNED  
ABOUT DOING TECHNICAL COOPERATION WORK

With my group, the Catholic overseas organizations, I have had the unusual opportunity now for thirty years of being engaged in synthesizing activities of our workers in almost every corner of the globe. Much of this has been done in the way of field surveys made during journeys through Africa, Asia and Latin America which consisted of methodically bringing together the views of our specialists in each area.

I shall sum up in five conclusions what these specialists have learned about doing technical cooperation work.

Conclusion I: Among our Catholic workers around the world are many technicians, some of them, I believe, very fine. But, taking our thousands of workers as a whole, producing technicians among them is not our special achievement. So far as technical cooperation is concerned, we have learned that our great mission to men over the earth is rather to promote social betterment through encouraging backward peoples to accept social change. How do we do this? Principally by serving as the champion of the technician among the backward peoples of the earth.

Thus, while a percentage of our Catholic workers around the world are technicians, the vision of our specialists extends beyond these technicians. Technical cooperation must not be a sealed-off activity, of interest to only a few. Technical cooperation is the business of all religious workers and their principal task in this cooperation is to champion the technician.

Conclusion II: Our technicians have learned that in each area we must use simple methods within the reach of the local economy, methods that so far as it is possible, wear the garb of local custom. Two principles follow from this:

- 1 - Betterment must never appear to local peoples to be a rich man's luxury;
- 2 - Betterment must not appear foreign to any people; it must belong; it must meld into the local pattern.

---

Speech by Father John Considine, M.M. of Maryknoll, N. Y., before the Conference for Agricultural Services in Foreign Areas, jointly sponsored by the United States Department of Agriculture and the Foreign Operations Administration in Washington, D. C., February 9, 1955, as a part of a panel entitled, "What Private Organizations Have Learned About Doing Technical Cooperation Work."



Conclusion III: We have learned to insist on local responsibility; we must work through the local people. Two principles follow from this:

- 1 - However we do it we must require the nationals to take the lead;
- 2 - We must require the foreigner, when he has to appear at all, to play the role of John the Baptist; he must decrease that the nationals may increase.

Conclusion IV: The family, not the individual, must be the basis for technical cooperation. The woman is at least as important as the man; the children are the great hope of the program. Home economy must be the basis for all other betterment.

Conclusion V: Teaching technological routines without education is a waste of time. Both schools for the young and adult education are essential to success. In the experience of our workers moral education is likewise essential; for credit unions and the like proper moral responsibility is very necessary.

We have technical projects, some of them extensive as that of Mariannhill near Durban in South Africa.

Over forty years ago the Fathers of Mariannhill evolved their motto: "Better fields, better homes, better hearts." Abbot Pfanner secured some twelve thousand acres about 20 miles from Durban, for what is today the beautiful Mariannhill center. The property stretches for seven miles through a narrow valley. On small farms through this valleysome 8,000 Africans live as the originators planned. Another thousand occupants include Cape Colored, Indians and Whites. At the center is a village of buildings - schools of craftsmanship, a college, a high school, a practice school for student teachers a hospital, an industrial school, and a mill, in addition to the church and the residence of the Padres.

Father Bernard Huss, now dead, was the most distinguished leader in this project. He was principal of the college and it is fascinating to study the simple but effective ways in which he stirred enthusiasm in his students, and a resolve to correct the mistakes of their forefathers.

"How do the Bantu fail in their agriculture?" was his great question.

Up would go the hands of the boys; they wrote the answers on the blackboard:

- 1 - The Bantus plant at the wrong time;
- 2 - Their plowing is careless and not deep enough;
- 3 - Bad seed is used;
- 4 - The Bantus are lazy; they plow too small portions of land; they plant the corn too closely.

Thus the boys wrote the litany of the agricultural sins of their people. So much for the negative side; on the positive side each student had on the one hand an individual plot of land and also he was required to do group work in common fields. Thus there were two aims:

- 1 - A competitive sense;
- 2 - A spirit of cooperation.

Each year to this day a local agricultural show is held; the whole countryside participates in the festivities, sings the praise-songs in the traditional Zulu style.

The South African government engaged Father Huss to write his Textbook on Agriculture, published by Longmans, Green of London, studies by hundreds of thousands of Africans in the Union.

But - such projects as Mariannhill are the achievement of only the few among Catholic workers overseas. The typical worker has a special place in the affairs of his people. He spends his life at the grass roots level, he burrows into the affections of his people, he holds their confidence as few others, whether nationals or foreigners.

With such a position what can be his most valuable contribution to the promotion of technical cooperation? By and large, over the world as a whole, his best role is to persuade his people to accept the technician.

I saw a concrete example along this line in the little village of Chinchero, 25 miles outside Cuzco, Peru, 11,000 feet above sea level in a lovely valley set amid snow-topped peaks of the Andes. Chinchero was picked jointly by United States and Peruvian government officials to be one of four model villages in Peru. The plan turned around the escuela nuclear, a plan in which the youngsters are brought in to a central school and which reaches out into the families of the youngsters for all-around social betterment. Among the workers in Chinchero was a most interesting mountain woman now the directress, Alicia de Tamayo, who in 1952 spent ten months here in Washington under training by the United States Department of Agriculture. Her stay in Washington was the greatest event in her life.

After the authorities from Lima and the American representative had made their plan and had moved into this remote mountain valley, failure stared them in the face. Nobody was interested; almost everybody was cold and hostile.

"I know what we should do," said one of the men from Lima. "We should get these people's archbishop to help us!"

The model village today is an outstanding success but it quite probably would never have prospered were it not for the role played by the local Catholic workers, in this case the Peruvian Archbishop of Cuzco and the local village Padre.



They found the archbishop thoroughly sympathetic. He journeyed out to Chinchero, gathered a great part of the 10,000 mountaineers around him, harangued them long and warmly and earnestly in a way they understood and loved. The gist of his words were these: "Have confidence in these people who have come among you. They are good people, they want to help you, your archbishop knows that what they want you to do is good for you and for your children."

When the archbishop finished, the ice was broken. Henceforth the people responded enthusiastically, Servicio Unidad was launched in Chinchero.

In all the many-sided programs that we follow in Asia, Africa, Latin America, one factor is always present when we succeed -- namely, a sympathetic understanding of the huge difficulties which simple people everywhere experience when faced with social change.

One of our Catholic workers in Africa summed up his experience thusly: "Long ago in Germany when I was a boy, the modern harvester came for the first time to our neighborhood. We gathered from miles around to stare in wonderment at it. 'Ach!' cried one old farmer and many echoed his words, 'it can't be right! No weird thing that can tie knots can be right. I swear I'll never use it!' In talking to my Africans I often think of that machine. If farmers in dear old Germany could fight like that against change, why should we be surprised at the African villagers?"

From the experience of our Catholic workers, I offer five suggestions to professionals in technical cooperation who must labor overseas:

- 1 - Don't overlook the value of the religious worker at the grassroots level as a liaison with the people whose confidence he holds;
- 2 - Keep things simple in the back country; big plans only frighten people who live in little worlds;
- 3 - So manage things that the local people are led to solve their own problems through modestly trained individuals whom the people readily accept as of their own;
- 4 - Watch the home, not only the grain field;
- 5 - Watch convictions and attitudes, not merely techniques.







